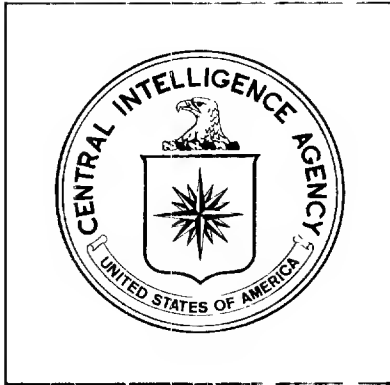


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STAFF NOTES:

Middle East Africa South Asia

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MIDDLE EAST - AFRICA - SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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China-Angola

Peking's Problems

As the deadline for Angolan independence draws nearer, Peking's involvement with the contending factions there appears to be growing even more troublesome. China's latest setback involves Tanzanian President Nyerere's refusal to forward a shipment of Chinese arms to Jonas Savimbi's National Union, the smallest of Angola's three liberation groups. Peking apparently decided to respond to a request for aid from Savimbi several months ago when units of the Soviet-backed Popular Movement appeared to be moving toward a clear-cut military victory over both the National Union and Holden Roberto's National Front--which has received the bulk of Chinese assistance.* Some 90 tons of Chinese arms arrived in Dar es Salaam in late August destined for delivery to the National Union via Zambia under an agreement reached some time ago by Nyerere, Zambia's Kaunda, and Savimbi. The Tanzanians, however, have been sitting on the shipment for over a month.

* In his speech at the UN last week, Foreign Minister Chiao Kuan-hua claimed that Peking had "stopped giving new military aid to the three Angolan organizations" when Portugal agreed to grant Angola independence on November 11. From the Chinese viewpoint, "new" is undoubtedly the operative work in this statement; China has continued to try to honor old commitments to its Angolan clients by funneling arms through African intermediaries such as Zaire, Zambia and Tanzania.

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Peking is no doubt incensed over Nyerere's reneging on the arms shipment--as well as by the unsuccessful effort by Nyerere and Mozambique's Samora Machel to gain formal recognition for the Popular Movement at the Lusaka meeting. The Chinese reaction, however, may be tempered by the need to limit the damage to the carefully and expensively constructed Sino-Tanzanian relationship and by the realities of the situation in Angola.

China's move to shore up the National Union was most likely undertaken originally as part of an effort to nudge Savimbi's group toward a formal alliance with Holden Roberto's fading National Front. Peking probably reckoned that the Popular Movement might then agree to a cease-fire and the re-establishment of a tripartite transition coalition. The chances for such a development have diminished, however, in the face of the unyielding rivalry between the Popular Movement and the National Front and by Savimbi's failure to show much interest in formally aligning himself with the Front. Under these conditions, Peking would appear to have little to gain and much to lose if it tried to apply the sort of pressure that might make Nyerere reverse his stand on the arms shipment.

Zambia's stand in the bruhaha over the embargoed arms may provide some small measure of consolation for Peking.



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Kaunda, of course, had good reason to make a show of support for Savimbi since the Benguela railroad-- which previously carried a significant portion of Zambia's copper exports and will again become important once the fighting stops in Angola--runs through National Union territory. Nevertheless, Peking will probably be heartened that Kaunda has not been stampeded into the Popular Movement camp and will read this as a sign of improvement in Sino-Zambian relations. In recent weeks both Peking and Lusaka have apparently been trying to repair damages to their ties caused by a blow-up this spring over differing views on the Rhodesian question. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM)

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Afghanistan

Major Cabinet Reshuffle

President Daoud last weekend carried out his most extensive cabinet change since he was restored to power in a military coup two years ago. The changes suggest a further reduction of the influence of the left.

Finance Minister Abdul Ellah was named second deputy prime minister, further diluting the influence of the leftist, first deputy prime minister, Hassan Sharq. Sharq's position had already been weakened by the removal or downgrading in recent months of several of his supporters in the bureaucracy.

Two other leading leftists also were losers. In an apparent demotion, Faiz Mohamad was moved from the powerful position of minister of the interior to another cabinet post. His successor, Abdul Qadir, is said to be a member of an anti-leftist faction that may be led by General Haider, the powerful commander of army forces in the Kabul area. Another leftist, Ghulam Bakhtari, lost his job as minister of agriculture.

The US embassy in Kabul observes that the changes should add to the competence of the cabinet. Abdul Ellah's elevation may be an exception. Daoud seems to trust him, but other politically aware Afghans say he is inexperienced and has limited ability. President Daoud himself remains as prime minister, minister of defense, and minister of foreign affairs. (CONFIDENTIAL NO FOREIGN DISSEM/BACKGROUND USE ONLY)



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